

First steel cut on new ferries

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Two 100-metre vessels to be built on the Clyde.

The Minister for Transport and Islands has marked the formal start of construction of two new 100-metre ferries for the Clyde and Hebrides network at Ferguson Marine Engineering Limited (FMEL) on the Clyde.

Derek Mackay started the computer-guided laser to cut the ceremonial first steel for the vessels, currently known as Hull 801 and Hull 802, and met some of the workforce who will help build them.

The £97 million contract was signed in October 2015, securing around 150 existing jobs in the Port Glasgow and Inverclyde area. New jobs will also be created at the shipyard as a result of FMEL winning the contract, as part of the company's overall growth strategy.

FMEL will undertake the detailed design and construction work of the new 'dual fuel' vessels in Scotland, as well as their testing, equipping, launching and delivery. The new vessels will join the fleet, owned by Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL).

The first ferry is expected to be delivered in May 2018, with the second vessel following a few months later.

Mr Mackay said:

"I'm delighted to help cut the first steel for these new ferries, marking the start of construction on this massive project that has brought large shipbuilding back to the Clyde.

"The Scottish Government is committed to creating the vital jobs needed to boost local economies and help stimulate growth across Scotland. This £97 million contract means FMEL can retain its 150-strong workforce, as well as take on more staff and apprentices.

"The ferries themselves will be welcome additions to the Clyde and Hebrides network, helping the Scottish Government to continue to provide safe and reliable services for the communities that depend on them.

"The vessels will also be 'dual-fuel ferries', allowing them to use cleaner fuel and future-proofing them for the advent of tighter regulations around sulphur emissions.

"I look forward to seeing these new ferries join the West Coast ferry fleet in the future."

FMEL Managing Director, Liam Campbell said:

“Cutting first steel on these two vessels from CMAL signifies an important milestone for the yard and will allow the workforce to steadily grow over the next years. Our new facility will provide highly efficient state-of-the-art shipbuilding and fabrication services to customers in all sectors.

“We look forward to working closely with CMAL and CalMac on this project to ensure world class vessels for a world class owner and operator”.

Erik Østergaard, Chair of CMAL said:

“Today’s steel cutting ceremony marks the first important milestone in the construction of these innovative dual-fuel ferries, as work gets underway to build the first vessel.

“Hulls 801 and 802 will become the latest vessels in our fleet and strengthen our commitment to using cutting edge technology and design to create sustainable and reliable ferries and we look forward to the first of these vessels going into service in 2018. This construction project is the latest step in our ambitious fleet renewal plans to ensure our ferries continue to meet the needs of the communities we serve.”

Background info:

- The ferries are designed to carry 127 cars or 16 HGVs or a combination of both and up to 1,000 passengers. The ships will be capable of operating across a range of drafts and speeds to meet the requirements of the current operator, CalMac Ferries Ltd, to service a wide range of ports and routes.
- The new ferries are earmarked for the Ardrossan-Brodick and the Uig Triangle routes, although the final decision on vessel deployment rests with the ferry operator and will be informed by further analysis of demand on all major routes.
- The ferries will be ‘dual-fuel’ vessels so they can operate on liquefied natural gas (LNG) and marine diesel. LNG is significantly cleaner and has been adopted by ferry operators in Northern Europe in response to tighter emissions regulations.
- Each vessel will enter into service following berthing trials, sea trials and crew training, usually 2-3 months after delivery.

Ends.